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TIME, PLAYGOERS PLEASE

by Eric Shorter

If you like dividing the world into two kinds of person you will know that of the many divisions which make life seem so easily definable the one about pubs is as plain as most. That is to say, there are pub people and there are non-pub people.

There are those of us who couldn't consider a day completely spent without a spell at one bar or another, standing and staring or sitting and ruminating, or gossiping with a stranger or the barman or the barmaid (blonde and giggly for preference).

And there are those for whom a pub is altogether too social, too risky in the scope it brings for meeting other people, or too rowdy or too beery or too clearly linked with liquor, or just a seeming waste of time when we have no time to waste.

This distinction between pub persons and non-pub persons manifests itself partly through termperament but within pubs you still find the withdrawn sort or the forward-pushing sort, the listener and the talker, the lonely and the gregarious. Do you however find playgoers? Except in notoriously "theatrical" pubs did you ever hear the drama come up in conversation?

Yet it is a fact, so firmly established that it scarcely needs restating, that more and more pubs are becoming better noted for their plays than their beer.

And if we were to try dividing people up into those who go to pub theatres and those who go to pubs I suspect that although there would be certain exceptions, as there should be to every rule, this one would hold, so to say, water. That is, people who go to pub plays do not habitually haunt pubs.

If they did they wouldn't want to bother with play. The nature of a pub, with its tradition of repose and release from concentration (except when an argument occasionally obtrudes), contradicts the nature of the theatre, which is by tradition an assembly of persons whose silence is expected for the sake of the performance being staged by actors who must be even more disciplined as artists obeying what the author has set down for them.

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How it comes about therefore that more and more people find themselves gingerly traversing saloon bars in search of a play (usually up the back stairs through a curtain in a back room) is something of a social mystery. After all, if you are settled in a bar with some friends and some drinks you aren't likely to want to abandon them for a bench or hardish chair for two hours in a darkened attic and to pay to do so.

Nor, if your intent is mainly dramatic can you afford to treat the pub as a pub without either forgetting to go to the play or being rather hazy or too cheerful once you reach it. In any case you may (as already hinted) simply not like pubs, least of all when they aren't your own local.

Yet there they are, in their modest ways, thriving as an adjunct of British theatrical life, and of new writing and acting which are being taken seriously by all sorts of people. Not, I hasten to add, thriving with the kind of profits which might appeal to a West End manager (though a few of the plays put on in pubs have moved into the West End with striking financial success).

The profits are more often than not artistic. The reason is obvious. The actors work for nothing or so little that Equity (the actors' union) turns a politely blind eye to what some unionists might consider to be outrageous exploitation. They work for nothing or next to nothing because they like the work. It is work that might not come their way for a real wage because it is artistically exciting.

And more and more playgoers, recognising this spirit of enterprise, are discovering that playgoing on this uncommercial level is in many ways refreshing compared to a conventional evening at the theatre. And (of course) much cheaper.

The satisfaction comes not only from the low price of admission but from the different approach on all sides.

The customer discovers a less formal or intense atmosphere as soon as he enters the pub as he pushes his way past the crowded bar which makes such a useful meeting place before the play, during the interval and afterwards. The auditorium will probably present a quiet, shadowy contrast with its small arena stage, surrounding benches and underlit intimacy.

To it however one may take a drink to consume diplomatically during the performance. And though these audiences are usually less chatty and socially self-important than you find at a major theatre, they enjoy the adventurousness of your average pub theatre. Not just its shape and size (the acting comes up very close) but also the riskier choice of play and theme.

The technical facilities may seem limited enough with no more than a sound system and a dozen lights stuck on the ceiling. No curtains. No trap doors. No orchestra pit. And certainly no room for flying scenery. But these limits are a stimulus to the players and their author, director, designer and manager.

In fact there doesn't seem to be much in the international repertoire which pub theatres won't touch if they want to. With modest overheads they can go out on almost any limb they like. Which explains their appeal as pockets of new talent.

So the next time you see a play billed at a pub – at, say, the Old Red Lion or the Lamb and Flag, or the Orange Tree, or the Bush or the King's Head – do not be put off (if you are a non-pub person) from entering. And if you're a pub person, remember you can take your drink to the show and get what may prove another dimension in playgoing.

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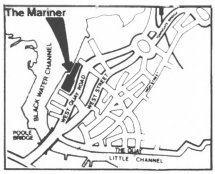

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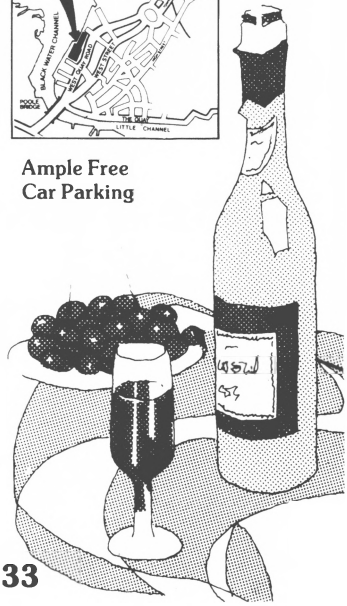

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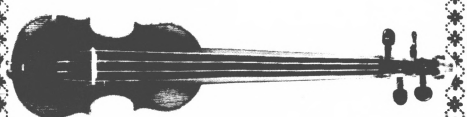

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THE JIM DAVIDSON SHOW

Overture

Terry Seabrooke

Michelle Fisher

Terry Seabrooke

INTERVAL

Jim Davidson

JIM DAVIDSON

Jim Davidson was born in Blackheath, London in 1953 and attended St. Austen's School in Charlton. It was at school that he first started entertaining.

Says Jim: "When I was twelve, I went on holiday to Norfolk with my parents, where my father met a guy who was a friend of Ralph Reader, and had connections with the London Gang Show. He asked me if I would like to audition for a spot on the show, and being a keen Boy Scout and ever prepared, I jumped at the chance.

"I did the audition at the London Palladium, before the great man himself – Ralf Reader – and got the job! Actually, at that time, I used to do a lot of impressions, so besides appearing in the 1966 Gang Show as part of the 'chorus', I was also given my very own 6-minute spot.

"I also appeared in the following year's show . . . and then I got totally disillusioned with showbusiness, after failing the audition for the part of the 'Artful Dodger' in the film *Oliver.* That's it, I thought, I'm finished with the business. I was thirteen."

When he left school, however, he went through a series of jobs with amazing regularity. "I was a messenger boy, painter, window cleaner, van driver, dumper truck driver, porter. You name it, I did," he adds.

"I kept getting the sack. I couldn't get up in the morning and I was always late for work. I suppose I must have gone through three jobs a month. And whenever I went along for a new position, and had to fill in the relevant forms, stating my previous occupations, I used to fill up three or four sheets of foolscap paper listing my former trades. People got fed up with me in the end.

"When I was sixteen, I used to play drums in a local pub. Nothing special, just me and a piano player. Then one Sunday evening, I went along to this pub in Woolwich where they had a regular stand-up comic appearing. Just my luck. On that particular night, the comedian didn't turn up. So pushed into it by my friends, I ended up on stage, telling gags. And I got a great reception from the audience. I suppose that was how it all started. From there I used to appear as often as possible in pubs and clubs, wherever I was wanted.

"About six months later, a friend of mine rang me up and told me that the landlord of the Black Bull in Lewisham was looking for a comedian, and I'd been recommended. So I nipped along there smartish, and spun the guv'nor a right line about all the places I'd appeared in. He bought it . . . and gave me the job at the grand sum of £6 a spot! Things just snowballed from there, and I was soon making a good living from the business on a semi-professional basis. Actually, I was really a full-time professional. After my last 'normal' job had folded, I decided I couldn't take any more of it, and just lived off my earnings as a comedian.

"It's funny," he said. "But I also auditioned for TV's *Opportunity Knocks* show – and was turned down! I did virtually the same act with which I won my first *New Faces* programme."

New Faces was indeed the turning point, for Jim came *second* in the 1976 Grand Final – and it proved a springboard for even greater success.

Next came more appearances on television including such shows as *The Sweepstake Game, Celebrity Squares,* three series of Thames' *What's On Next, Wednesday At Eight, London Night Out,* and *Seaside Special.*

Bill-topping cabaret engagements at all the major British nightspots and theatre seasons in pantomime at the Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham in *Dick Whittington* (1976); The Wimbledon Theatre in *Babes In The Wood* (1977); the Grand Theatre, Wolverhampton in *Cinderella* (1978); and the Hippodrome Theatre, Bristol (1979). His starring summer seasons have included *The All Laughter Show* at the North Pier, Blackpool (1977); *Startime '78* at the Winter Gardens, Margate (1978); *Startime '79* at the Princess Theatre, Torquay (1979); and *The Jim Davidson Show* at the Winter Gardens, Margate (1980).

At the beginning of 1979, Jim enjoyed outstanding success on television, when he starred in his own 6-week series for Thames TV called *The Jim Davidson Show.* He crowned a superb year, by being chosen to appear in the 1979 Royal Variety Show. A second hilarious series of *The Jim Davidson Show* was screened at the beginning of 1980, which resulted in Jim being voted 'The Funniest Man On Television' by readers of TV Times.

For the Christmas season 1980/81, Jim starred in the title role of the spectacular pantomime *Dick Whittington* at the London Palladium, while at the beginning of 1981, a brand new series of *The Jim Davidson Show* was screened by Thames Television throughout the full ITV network.
After a hectic round of cabaret engagements all over Britain, Jim opened for the Summer Season in his own show at the Winter Gardens, Bournemouth, on June 6th.
On July 23rd, Jim married Julie Gullick – a former advertising/promotions girl – at the Poole Registry Office, Poole, Dorset.

TERRY SEABROOKE

For modern comedy with a magical twist, Terry Seabrooke is now established in the front rank of novelty entertainers. This is an act where the gags flow as fast the tricks, and the magic has the inimitable stamp of the Terry Seabrooke personality in style and performance. One of the highlights of every show is the involvement of members of the audience in the act – there is no knowing what they will be involved in, but it all adds up to laughs and entertainment.
To quote from an American publication: "On his first visit to the States, Terry Seabrooke fractured the audience – we wondered what would happen on his return visit, and this time he compounded that fracture."
This is an act that always moves with the times with sparkling gags right up to the minute. His mannerisms and comedy presentations add a whole new dimension to magic. He takes the ordinary and makes hilarious situations out of it.

MICHELLE FISHER

Michelle became interested in a show business career after learning Ballet, Tap and Contemporary Dance. She started singing professionally at the age of 15, after leaving school to join radio band Bob Miller and the Millermen with whom she stayed for two years. During this time she toured with The Supremes and Labi Siffri.
After working with three different groups, covering most styles of music, Michelle decided on a solo career and toured the country working in cabaret with such stars as Charles Aznavour, Bob Monkhouse, Gene Pitney and Roy Castle. As well as appearing on the top cruise liners around the world she has also twice visited the Caribbean.
Michelle went on to win her own show on television's *New Faces* and topping the musical acts in the *All Winners Show.* She completed two tours around England with the *Best of New Faces* and a summer show with Marti Caine and Colin Crompton.
After spending some time working abroad, last year she returned to the UK to pursue her career. In May and June of this year Michelle will be touring with Jim Davidson.
Michelle is a tall attractive brunette with a quality in her voice that will ensure her a successful career.

Forthcoming EVENTS

Poole Arts Centre

For full details of all Arts Centre events pick up a monthly diary

Wessex Hall

Sunday 27th June

2CR presents

GRACE KENNEDY

7.30pm

£5, £4.20, £3.50

Wessex Hall

Wednesday 30th June

BARBARA DICKSON

7.30pm

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Wessex Hall

Saturday 3rd July

TOYAH WILCOX

7.30pm

£4.50 and £4.00

ONLY A FEW TICKETS LEFT

Towngate Theatre

26th July–7th August

THE KEN DODD SHOW

6.15pm and 8.30pm

£3.60, £3.20, £2.70

Wessex Hall

Tuesday 27th July

THE CLASH

7.30pm

£4.00, £3.50

Wessex Hall

Saturday 28th August

BUCKS FIZZ

8.00pm

£5.00, £4.00, £3.00

Wessex Hall

16th–21st August

THE YETTIES

A LITTLE BIT OF DORSET

7.45PM

£3.50, £2.70, £2.00

Director: Anthony M. Covell

Information

Poole Arts Centre is administered by Poole Arts Trust Ltd, a charitable body set up for the purpose. Admission of the public to the Arts Centre is free and completely open to all.

The Arts Centre is open as follows:
Monday to Thursday 10 a.m. to 10.30 p.m.
Friday and Saturday 10 a.m. to 11 p.m.
The Centre is closed on Sundays unless a major concert is being presented.

Poole Arts Trust Ltd acknowledges financial assistance from Poole Borough Council.

The management reserves the right to refuse admission and to change the performance or the cast without prior notification in the event of illness or any unavoidable cause.

Security
Briefcases, packages etc., may be subject to inspection and should be deposited in a cloakroom.

Smoking
Smoking is not permitted in the auditoria.

First Aid
Facilities are provided by members of St. John Ambulance on duty in the theatre who give their services voluntarily. Please contact an usherette if attention is required.

Lost Property
All enquiries should be made at the information desk or by telephone Poole 670521. Unclaimed property will be disposed of after a period of three months.

Parking
For your convenience a reduced rate parking facility is available at the Kingland Road Multi Storey car park. On entering the car park a cream ticket will be issued which it is necessary to feed into one of the two machines located on the Arts Centre's ground floor together with 50p from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. or 40p from 6 p.m. to 2 a.m. The machine will then issue a blue ticket marked EXIT which you will need to retain until you leave the car park. When you leave the car park feed this ticket into the machine at the exit and it will release the barrier automatically. Using this system in this way you will not have to queue or waste time finding change when you leave the car park.
THE SYSTEM IS NOT VALID BEFORE 1 p.m.

Invalid Car Parking
Limited space is available for the above in the slip road at the front of the Centre. Please telephone the management on the night prior for reservations on Poole 670521.
Patrons are requested to limit car parking in front of the Centre to a maximum of 10 minutes when setting down or collecting passengers or when visiting the Box Office.

Volunteers
The Hall and Theatre doors are manned by a team of local people. If you are interested in helping please ask the Manager on duty for further details.

Latecomers
In response to general request, latecomers cannot be admitted to their seats until the interval or a suitable break in the performances.

Cameras/Tape Recorders
Both photography and the use of tape recorders are strictly prohibited in all parts of the theatre.

Mailing List
Advance programme information can be received regularly by joining the Mailing List. Please enquire at the Information Desk.

Box Office – Poole 685222
The Box Office is open from Monday to Saturday 10 a.m. to 9.00 p.m.
Sundays 6.30 – 9.00 if performance.

Bars
The Whitecliff Bar is always open before, during and after performances. Drinking is not permitted in the Wessex Hall or Towngate Theatre, Interval drinks may be ordered from the bar.

Functions
For your private functions, parties etc., please contact the Information Officer on Poole 670521 for further information.

Exhibitions, Conferences, Promotions
Please contact the Information Officer.

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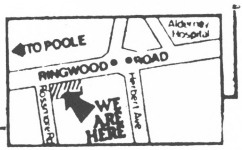

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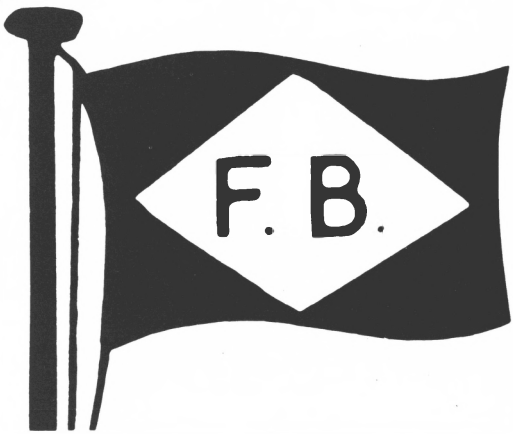

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DOES THE ACTOR REALLY FEEL?

by George Henry Lewes

In how far does the actor feel the emotion he expresses? When we hear of Macready and Liston lashing themselves into a fury behind the scenes in order to come on the stage sufficiently excited to give a truthful representation of the agitations of anger, the natural inference is that these artists recognised the truth of the popular notion which assumes that the actor really feels what he expresses.

But this inference seems contradicted by experience. Not only is it notorious that the actor is feigning, and that if he really felt what he feigns he would be unable to withstand the wear and tear of such emotion repeated night after night; but it is indisputable to those who know anything of art, that the mere presence of genuine emotion would be such a disturbance of the intellectual equilibrium as entirely to frustrate artistic expression.

Talma told M. Barrière that he was once carried away by the truth and beauty of the actress playing with him till she recalled him by a whisper: "Take care, Talma, you are moved!"

The red, swollen, and distorted features of grief, the harsh and screaming intonation of anger, are unsuited to art; the paralysis of all outward expression and the flurry and agitation of ungraceful gesticulation which belong to certain powerful emotions may be described by the poet but cannot be admitted into plastic art.

The poet may tell us what is signified by the withdrawal of all life and movement from the face and limbs, describing the internal agitations or the deadly calm which disturb or paralyse the sufferer; but the painter, sculptor or actor must tell us what the sufferer undergoes and tell it through the symbols of outward expression.

The internal workings must be legible in the external symbols, and these external symbols must also have a certain grace and proportion to affect us aesthetically.

All art is symbolical. If it presented emotion in its real expression it would cease to move us to art; sometimes cease to move us at all or move us only to laughter. There is a departure from reality in all the stage accessories. The situation, the character, the language, all are at variance with daily experience.

Emotion does not utter itself in verse nor in carefully chosen sentences. And to speak verse with the negligence of prose is a serious fault. There is a good passage in Colley Cibber's account of Betterton which actors and critics who are not alive to the immense effects that lie in fine elocution would do well to ponder.

"In the just delivery of poetical numbers, particularly where the sentiments are pathetic, it is scarce credible upon how minute an article of sound depends their greatest beauty or inaffection."

"The voice of a singer is not more strictly ty'd to time and tune than that of an actor in theatrical elocution. The least syllable too long or too slightly dwelt upon in a period depreciates it to nothing; which very syllable, if rightly touched, shall, like the heightening stroke of light from a master's pencil, give life and spirit to the whole."

Hence the utter impossibility of attending to such delicate minutiae if the speaker be really agitated by emotion. The same applies to all the other details of his art. His looks and gestures, his position in the picture, all will be out of proportion and fail of their due effect unless he is master of himself.

The reader sees at once that as a matter of fact the emotions represented by the actor are not agitating him as they would agitate him in reality. He is feigning and we know that he is feigning. He is representing a fiction which is to move us as a fiction and not to lacerate our sympathies as they would be lacerated by the agony of a fellow-creature actually suffering in our presence.

The tears we shed are tears welling from a sympathetic source; but their salt bitterness is removed and their pain is pleasurable.

But now arises the contradiction which perplexes judgement. If the actor lose all power over his art under the disturbing influence of emotion, he also loses all power over his art in proportion to his deadness to emotion.

If he really feel, he cannot act; but he cannot act unless he feel. All the absurd effects of mouthing and grimacing actors to produce an effect, all the wearisomeness of cold conventional representation – mimicry without life – we know to be owing to the unimpassioned talent of the actor.

Observe, I do not say to his unimpassioned nature. It is quite possible for a man of exquisite sensibility to be ludicrously tame in his acting if he has not the requisite talent of expression or has not yet learned how to modulate it so as to give it due effect.

But although it is quite possible for an actor to have sensibility without the talent of expression, and therefore to be a tame actor though an impassioned man, it is wholly impossible for him to express what he has never felt, to be an impassioned actor with a cold nature.

In other words, how far does he really feel the passion he expresses? It is a question of degree. As in all art, feeling lies at the root, but the foliage and flowers, though deriving their sap from emotion, derive their form and structure from the intellect.

The poet cannot write while his eyes are full of tears, while his nerves are trembling from the mental shock and his hurrying thoughts are too agitated to settle into definite tracks. But he must have felt or his verse will be a mere echo. It is from the memory of feelings that he draws the beautiful image with which he delights us. He is a spectator of his own tumult. Though moved by it, he can yet so master it as to select from it only those elements which suit his purpose.

This is true also for the fine actor. Talma said of himself: "I have suffered cruel losses and been assailed with profound sorrows; but after the first moment when grief vents itself in cries and tears I found that the actor was unconsciously studying the man, and catching nature in the act."

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